

TOP TIPS

FOR STARTING A CAREER IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

TOP STATS

8,000+

Businesses

350+

Food & drink sector

98%

Classed as micro,
small or medium-
sized

(less than 10 and up to 250
employees)

3,000

Agriculture, forestry
& fisheries jobs

(representing 1 in 10 jobs)

5,000

Manufacturing jobs

5,500

Education jobs

5%

Accommodation
enterprise

8%

Arts, entertainment
& recreation.

The South Downs National Park is a place where people live, work and shape the landscape, an area of protected countryside for everyone to visit and enjoy. Rural businesses and enterprise within the National Park play an essential part in conserving and enhancing the landscape and promoting opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment. The National Park Authority supports businesses as part of its duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.

STEP 1. YOU ARE ALREADY IN A GOOD POSITION

Start by recognising and being positive about the skills and abilities you already have. Many jobs in the Park are in the service industry, meaning good communication is high on the list of priority skills and is as important for entry level jobs as it is for chief executives. Take a few minutes to list examples of when and where you have demonstrated the skills and abilities listed below.

- Good communication skills
- Ability to work well as part of a team
- Ability to organise workload effectively
- Good levels of accuracy and attention to detail

TOP TIP:

For each bullet point, be specific and note down a detailed example(s). Avoid talking generically about the fact you are a "great communicator". Instead, list an example where something you did was commended, or had a significant and positive impact on the situation, task, project or people. Your example could be with friends, as a volunteer, at work, or in a different setting.

e.g. "I demonstrated excellent verbal communication skills when I gave a presentation at school on coastal erosion and I was commended by my teacher on the clear explanation of the topic. I used written communication skills effectively in 2019 to arrange a weekend trip for my friends. I communicated by email with several accommodation providers and I was able to resolve any problems quickly due to the quality of the information I had communicated ahead of the trip"



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STEP 2. BE AMBITIOUS

Making a difference to the landscape, people and communities is key to working in the National Park and your ambitions should reflect that. Setting yourself an ambitious, long-term goal can create the motivation you need in the present to help you get your career underway. You might want to say to yourself:

"I will manage visitor services for an outdoor museum that gets 200,000 visitors every year."

"I will be chief executive of the National Trust by the time I'm 50."

"I will influence forestry policy across the region, with a focus on climate change, biodiversity and local products."

TOP TIP:

It is important to consider that most of your professional development will happen through your work experience and you may find that your goals change as you develop professionally. A lot of four-year-olds aspire to be dragons, but very few achieve it. Be open to the idea that your goal will change over time, keep reflecting on where you want to get to and how you can get there.

STEP 3. GAIN EXPERIENCE, SEARCH IN THE RIGHT PLACES AND INITIATE CONTACT

There are lots of businesses and organisations you might want to work for in the South Downs National Park and lots of ways you might hear about career opportunities with them.

- **Consider volunteering**, it can be a great way to make first contact with an organisation, gain some valuable experience and get a taste of what a particular job is all about. Our **Youth Action days** are a great way to get varied experience with a limited time commitment.
- **Ask about work experience** if you can't find anything on an organisation's website, send an email to their generic inbox or give them a call and ask if they offer work experience or student placements.
- **Subscribe to newsletters** and set up job alerts with listing websites, e.g. **Countryside Jobs Service, Environment Job, GreenJobs** are used by organisations across the conservation and environment sector. The county councils of **Hampshire, West Sussex** and **East Sussex**, as well as **Brighton & Hove City Council** also employ thousands of staff.
- **Save job vacancy pages in your browser favourites** and check in on them every now and then to see if your favourite organisations have any new opportunities that you might have missed in a newsletter, e.g. southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-people/jobs/
- **Ask your mentors** for ideas and guidance, whether that's school teachers, college lecturers, university professors or managers where you work.



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STEP 4. MAKE YOUR APPLICATION COUNT

Demonstrating to an employer that you share their values, are passionate about their cause and you already have ideas to contribute will greatly enhance an employer's perception of your skills and abilities. Think of it as a multiplier effect. Follow these simple steps when completing your application and attending an interview.

- **Do your research** – trawl an organisation's website, read third-party reviews and get opinions from friends and family. What makes the organisation tick? What are they trying to achieve? What new initiatives or projects are they running at the moment? Find out where your values and interests align with theirs. Hint: If they don't, make sure you carefully consider why you're applying before you go any further.
- **Understand what they are looking for** – there is no point in getting ready to show-off about the quality of the videos you produce for social media if the employer is looking for someone to write text for their website. Or, you need to be ready to make them realise that video is better than text for their business!
- **Demonstrate how your skills and abilities will support the organisation** – make it clear in your application how your values align with theirs. Give specific examples of where you will be able to use your skills and experience to support and potentially improve their products and services.
- **Present yourself positively at interview, first impressions count** – talk positively about yourself throughout the process, wear something that makes you feel confident and comfortable, make sure you arrive on time (or communicate clearly if you're going to struggle to make it to the interview on time).

TOP TIP:

Wherever possible, use the goods and services of the business as a customer before making your application. Being able to say "I was looking at your website last week" or "I had lunch in your café earlier this month" will show that you have already given your time and supported your potential employer's business. They are passionate about what they do and they will be pleased to know you've used their product or service.



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STEP 5. GO WITH THE FLOW AND MAKE THE MOST OF EXPERIENCES YOU WEREN'T EXPECTING

You've established your existing skills, set your long-term ambitions, been looking in all the right places and started to put in some really good applications. Now it's time to go with the flow and enjoy what comes your way. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez went from studying International Relations at university, to working as a bartender and waitress, to becoming the youngest woman to be elected to the United States Congress. Arnold Schwarzenegger went from world-champion bodybuilder, to award-winning actor, to Governor of California. Who knows where you, Alexandria or Arnold will end up next!

TOP-TIP:

Stick with it and set yourself an intended timeframe of commitment before you start to think too hard about what's next. This will vary depending on the role, but between 3 and 12 months will likely help you understand what it is you like about a job and what you don't. You'll then be able to use that information to help you plan the next steps on your career path. It might be another year in your current role, a new job, a return to education or a move into a different sector. Employers expect candidates to come with a wide range of experience, but if you've switched jobs every 2 weeks, you likely won't have developed a strong set of core skills (communication, working as part of a team, etc.) which is an important part of building a career.


To learn more about specific roles in the National Park, visit our careers page: southdowns.gov.uk/careers

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